
**MOTHER TONGUE AND WRITTEN ENGLISH IN LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOLS. A CASE STUDY
OF SELECTED SCHOOLS IN KASEREM GREATER SUB COUNTIES****1 Jaberi Salimini, 2 Mirembe Susan****1, 2 Metropolitan International University****ABSTRACT**

This study was conducted to find out the influence of mother tongue (kupsabiny) on written English language in lower secondary Schools. A Case study of selected secondary schools in greater kaserem sub counties. Data collection tool included a questionnaire by which participants were asked to rate the questions and tick or write in the correct blank spaces. The questionnaire was based on both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The participants of the study were 60 students from kaserem, kawowo and Mama Janet secondary Schools in greater kaserem sub counties of kapchorwa district. The questionnaire was randomly applied. The students ages ranged from 15 to 18 and the mean age was 16. From the findings, thirty (36.6%) of the respondents said that teachers should tell them the correct ways of writing in English. Moreover, (18.3%) of the students reported that they need their teachers to explain the structural difference between their mother tongue and English and four (3.3%) of the students responded that they need nothing from their teachers. Parents are encouraged to educate their children at an early age because children are capable to acquire Languages better while young. Learners are guided to accept to make mistakes while speaking English because through mistakes, we can learn to speak and write fluently. It is also rationally fitting if students can limit speaking in their mother tongue so as to have smooth transition to written English language.

Key words: mother tongue, written english and lower secondary schools**Background of the study.**

Mother tongue is essential for learning as part of intellectual ability. It is the language that human beings acquire from birth. Studies show that students who come to school with a solid foundation in their mother tongue develops stronger literacy abilities (Emmanuel et al., 2023). Baker (2000), Cummins (2000), and Skutnabb-kangas (2000) cited that: When parents spend time with their children discussing issues with them in a way that develops their mother tongues' vocabularies and concepts, children come to school well prepared to learn and succeed educationally (Christopher et al., 2022).

A school system which sends out students who are unable to operate in the official language of the country (mother tongue) creates political and social instability, (Zulaikah & Rebecca, 2023). All normal students should therefore be able to read and write any material to enable them deal with all personal and public situations, and talk confidently

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enough in any conversation. On the contrary, a school system which does not offer their essentials is, stealing life chances from their students (Anthony, Kazaara, Kazaara, et al., 2023).

Chomsky's view of what it means to know a language is reflected in his distinction between linguistic competence and linguistic performance. In aspect of the theory of syntax, Chomsky writes: linguistic theory is concerned with an ideal speaker-listener in a completely homogeneous speech community, who knows its language perfectly and unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions shift off attention and interest, and errors in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance (Ntirandekura et al., 2022). The perfect knowledge referred to here is the mastery of the abstract system of rules by which a person is able to understand and produce any and all of the well-formed sentences of his language.

Uganda as a country originally under the influence of the British, used English as the major medium of communication and as an official language. In reference to the Ministry of Education and Sports, English is one of the compulsory subjects taught in the school curriculum (Victoria et al., 2023). The use of mother tongue is a medium of instruction in lower primary school levels of primary one to primary three. According to Uganda National Policy (2012), English as a medium of instruction starts from upper primary four to tertiary institutions of learning. This means that, both government and private schools use English as a medium of instruction and communication in the teaching and learning process of other subjects (Anthony, Kazaara, & Kazaara, 2023). However, basing on the general observation of the educational output in Uganda, and most specially Sebei region of kaserem greater sub counties, a good number of students who crossed over from government aided schools to private secondary Schools have proven to be a catabolic blow in the performance of written English. And perhaps in the creation of conducive learning environment in lower secondary Schools (Richard et al., 2023).

Statement of the problem

According to study investigation, there has been poor performance in written English language in kaserem greater Sub-counties, kapchorwa district. Comparatively, English language has been performing poorly in the last two decades (Ntirandekura et al., 2022). The dominant language used within this sub county is kupsabiny, which form the natural instrument of communication. For students to translate from kupsabiny to English, and perform well in written English language has a hard rock to crack (Musaibah et al., 2023). Most especially among the lower secondary students of kaserem, kawowo, and Mama Janet schools. This study therefore, established the influence of mother tongue on written English language in lower secondary Schools of kaserem, kawowo and Mama Janet in greater kaserem sub counties (Micheal et al., 2023).

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Research objectives

1. To establish how mother tongue influences the performance of learners in written English in kaserem, kawowo, and Mama Janet secondary Schools of kaserem greater sub counties
2. To find out the effects of mother tongue on the performance of learners in written English among Lower Secondary Schools in kaserem greater sub counties
3. To analyze the strategies to be used to minimize mother tongue effects on the performance in written English in kaserem, kawowo, and Mama Janet secondary Schools.

Methodology

Research design.

The design of this research was a descriptive survey. The use of this design was pertinent because an in-depth description and interpretation of the existing practices of mother tongue influence on learners' performance in written English language was required. The participants of the study were grade 9 English teachers, and students from the three lower secondary Schools of kaserem, kawowo, and Mama Janet in kaserem greater sub counties. There were 20 students and two English teachers from each of the three secondary schools respectively. The researcher selected only these three schools to make the study economical, time efficient, valid and effective. These students were purposely selected from the academic year 2020/21.

Sample Framework.

Sample Size.

A total of 60 students were interviewed from the three secondary schools in greater kaserem sub counties. This included students of the academic year 2020/21 in Lower secondary Schools of kaserem, kawowo and Mama Janet in senior one, two and three.

Sampling Technique and procedure.

According to Mutai (2001) in purposive sampling, the researcher handpicked the cases to be included in his Sample on the basis of his judgment of being typical on terms of current enrollment. It is through this method that I came up with the sample that was satisfactory to his research problem. The systematic sampling was used to select learners

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for each school by use of class registers depending on the number of learners in the class registers. Every third or fourth learner was for inclusion in the sampling depending on the number of learners in the class. Simple random sampling was used to select the respondents.

Research Methods.

The researcher used both qualitative and quantitative method of data analysis for the open-ended and close ended types of questionnaires. The qualitative data was analyzed through frequency and percentage as they are the most commonly used descriptive statistics to yield valuable quantitative results. The data was gathered using the above techniques, was analyzed and integrated using the following procedures; The data was arranged according to their order of importance. The organized student's response was be tabulated. The data from the interview was kept and based on their items, and was described qualitatively. As a first step in the analysis of students' writing, the researcher marked the type of errors as in grammar, word order, and lexical relation.

Data Analysis.

Data was analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. Different data sets were used in analyzing data collected for instance; where necessary packages were used. Bar graphs were also used to give a clear outlook about the influence of mother tongue on written English in lower secondary Schools, and they were done in SPSS (Nelson et al., 2022). Recommendations were made using the outcome of the result of analysis.

RESULTS

Table 1: How often teachers teach English writing skills.

Response	Thrice	Twice	Once	Total
When do teachers teach writing?	2	32	10	44
Do teachers teach English language effectively?	10	9	01	20
Are students corrected when they go wrong?	3	11	16	30

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Total	15	52	27	94
Percentages	16	55	29	100

Source; Researcher, 2022

From the teacher's questionnaire, a number of observations were made by the researcher. It was observed that most teachers in kaserem greater sub counties teach writing skills either one or twice in a week. Among the methods used for writing, the dominant ones are; letter writing, summary writing, writing a curriculum vitae and composition writing based on the topics. The use of comprehension and teaching of grammar is less applied. It was also observed that textbooks for writing passages, chalkboards and pictures are major sources of materials during the writing lessons (Mark et al., 2023). Learners are given sorted passages to read, summarize and write compositions on the topics provided by the teachers.

Table 2: Table showing what students expect from English as a foreign language teacher to overcome mother tongue influence in their writing

1. What do you do to correct your errors as a result of your mother tongue influence in English language?		
RESPONSE	Number	Percentage

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A. I need correction by my teacher	5	8.3
B. I need to study the structure of my mother tongue and that of English	8	13.3
C. I need to practice writing in English	47	78.3
Total	60	100
2. What do you expect from your teachers to improve the influence of your mother tongue in your writings of paragraph in English language?		
A. To tell you the correct way/ form of writing English	22	36.6
B. To explain the structural difference between your mother tongue and that of English language	11	18.3
C. To explain the place of your errors and how to correct it.		
D. I need nothing.	25	42
	2	3.3
Total	60	100

Source; Researcher, 2022

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In Table 2, (42%) of the reported that they expect from their teachers to explain the place of their errors and how to correct those errors. Thirty (36.6%) of the respondents said that teachers should tell them the correct ways of writing in English. Moreover, (18.3%) of the students reported that they need their teachers to explain the structural difference between their mother tongue and English. Four (3.3%) of the students responded that they need nothing from their teachers. From these data we can infer that the students almost equally need the help of their teachers to correct their errors and tell the correct way/form of writing in English (Oromo et al., 2023). This opinion is also depicted in the works of scholars such as Abrego (2013), and Skoog (2006). They pointed out that it is visible that for all teachers, error correction is essential at any level of study.

From the onset of the observations, kupsabiny as a mother tongue in kaserem subcounty has a greater influence on written English language among the lower secondary Schools of kaserem, kawowo and Mama Janet in kapchorwa district. The difference between the variables also exists. This is clearly evidenced from what the students wrote in their English language evaluation test.

In analyzing their work, some of the constructions made by students were drawn from the past experiences of their meaning in the composition. The direct interpretation and translation of words and sentences from kupsabiny to English were very recurring. One student in his composition wrote: 'I was told to return back and throw the bird'. This portrayed the learner's direct interpretation from kupsabiny to English. This is really controversial to the written English in that; 'return back' is considered a repetition and 'throwing the bird' is definitely out of context as one Stones the bird. In kupsabiny, "katakeey" is directly translated as "return back" and "weeir" means throw which is greatly different from English meaning and grammar. In addition, students also had errors in using prepositions. Some of these prepositional mistakes aroused from the fact that kupsabiny as a language accepts them.

According to Dulay and Burt (1974), the first language lays a foundation when assessing on the performance in a second language learning. The assumption that students did not have qualified teachers was unacceptable and inapplicable as far as English language writing and teaching was concerned. Most teachers who were in the research process had spent over eight years in the service. Some teachers depicted that teaching was interesting and enjoyable whereas others revealed that it was hard and rather difficult task. Most of the complains aroused from the fact that teachers lack adequate English textbooks.

Another problem was the heavily populated classrooms. This was the case in the government secondary Schools of kaserem and kawowo. Here a language teacher handled a class of over 200 students in a stream. The above-

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mentioned reason made some of the language teachers to lose interest in teaching written English skill. They are forced to teach without considering all the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

The results in teaching English showed that some of the skills were taught either in isolation or regularly. The writing and listening skills dominated and this was attributed to lack of lack of reading materials and students' fear for self-expression in English. The researcher discovered that the widely used Language outside the classroom and school environment was kupsabiny. This too contributed to mother tongue interference in the government aided schools.

The dominance of Sebei teachers in the three selected schools in kaserem subcounty revealed that some secondary Schools hate English language. It is for this reason that students adopted kupsabiny as a common Language around the school compound as it is the case with kawowo secondary school. This is attributed to poor background that students had right I from primary. On this note, it has become incredibly hard for students to perform well in English language. This gave much room to mother tongue interference, rendering the null hypothesis significance.

In finding out possible solutions, the teachers experience difficulty in problem solving. This is simply because most students adopted kupsabiny and some few used kiswahili and lugisu. This result of the area of study thus, is that the surrounding environment was dominated by sabiny who used kupsabiny as the easiest means of communication. This brought errors in written English language because students' transfer the rules in their mother tongue to grammatical and lexical terms in written English language.

Conclusions of the study.

From the beginning of the study, the following was the data collected from student' questionnaire, teachers' interview and analysis of students' writing based on the influence of Mother tongue on written English language among lower secondary Schools in greater kaserem sub counties.

Items such as spelling errors, grammatically errors, and word order were negatively influenced by kupsabiny Language as a mother tongue. This was mainly found in the aspects of; spelling, structure, preposition, doubling of subjects, plural formation, synonyms, one word for different uses and similar words. However, written Language is very vital in proving that an individual has gone to school. This means that when people are learnt, they can speak and write in a second language.

Recommendations of the study.

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Parents are encouraged to educate their children at an early age because children are capable to acquire Languages better while young. Learners are guided to accept to make mistakes while speaking English because through mistakes, we can learn to speak and write fluently. It is also rationally fitting if students can limit speaking in their mother tongue so as to have smooth transition to written English language. This may imply that students have regular practices in writing to enable them acquire writing skills.

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